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HOW TO... Use the Windows Language Bar

If you have to work in more than one language, or even just write the occasional foreign sentence, Windows can help.

Lauren Taylor shows you how to mind your language

With the Windows Language Bar, you can change the input language in a couple of clicks. So, for example, to start typing in German you just select that language from the toolbar and you'll have instant access to letters with umlauts, such as ü, plus anything else you'd expect to find on a German keyboard. It is possible to speed the process up further by setting keyboard shortcuts. We'll show you how using Windows XP, noting any differences in Vista.

1 Click on the Start button and go to the Control Panel. If it's in Classic View, click on Switch to Category View or Control Panel Home in Vista. In Windows XP, click on Date, Time, Language and Regional Settings, Add other languages. Go to the Languages tab and click on the Details button. In Vista, click on Clock, Language, Region, Change keyboards or other input methods. On the Keyboards and Languages tab, click on the Change Keyboards button. In Windows XP and Vista, click on the Add button.

2 In the Add Input language dialog box that appears, click on the down-pointing arrow to the right of the Input Language box. Select the relevant

language from the drop-down menu. The entry in the Keyboard layout box changes automatically to match your selection. You can change this manually if you prefer by clicking in the box. Click OK and repeat to add as many languages as you like. When you're done, click on Apply and then the Key Settings button. Here you can set keyboard shortcuts for switching between input languages. When you're done, click OK.

3 In the Regional and Language Options dialog box, there are two options on the Language tab that you may need to tick. These enable support for scripts such as Chinese, and for languages read right to left.

4 The Language Bar will be displayed on the far right of the Windows taskbar, next to the clock. Each language is given a two-letter abbreviation. Click on the two letters – these will be EN if English is your default language. From the menu that appears, select the relevant language. The Language Bar can be floated on the screen. Click on the language abbreviation letters and select 'Show the Language bar'. To add languages quickly in future, click on the down-pointing arrow in the Language Bar and select Settings.

